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ABSTRACT

This serial issue contains five articles relating to career exploration for middle school youth. The first article makes up most of the publication. It explains the concept of Future Options Education, basic tenets of which are the following: (1) career and college preparatory interventions need to be age and stage appropriate; (2) effective learning strategies for young adolescents need to incorporate the themes of "high expectations, high content, and high support"; (3) schools and employment programs need not wait for total school reform to begin to address career education; and (4) there is no one best approach to career development. Future Options Education promotes the use of horizon-broadening learning experiences that include an activity base, self-exploration, adult reinforcement, and a sense of belonging to a group. Future Options Education includes five topic areas: activities that introduce students to the world of work, activities that show the relationship between postsecondary education and good jobs, activities that introduce some key realities of postsecondary education or training, activities that investigate ways to pay for education or training after high school, and activities that keep the door open for future options. Keys to a successful Future Options Education strategy are individualized assessment and the development of an individual Future Options Education Plan. Two case studies of Future Options Education in action and lessons from middle school career programs are included in the report. A list of 15 suggested resources is provided, and reports on projects in progress at the Center for Human Resources, Brandeis University, are included. (KC)

PRACTICAL LESSONS FROM RESEARCH AND PROGRAM EXPERIENCE

Youth Programs

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Future Options Education: Careers and Middle School Youth

One of the growing themes in education and employment services is the need for early intervention in addressing the social and educational needs of disadvantaged youth. Stimulated by the 1988 report by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, "Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century," policy makers and reformers in education are increasingly turning their attention to the needs of younger adolescents and taking a fresh look at educational practices in the middle schools.

As the emphasis of youth employment policy shifts towards dropout prevention and the development of work-related basic skills, employment and training practitioners are also beginning to work with younger populations. Many communities have established new in-school and summer services for 14 and 15 year olds (the nationally recognized STEP initiative [Summer Training and Education Program] is one example), and as the concern over the work readiness of young adults grows, educators and employment professionals are looking at how to introduce work-related skills and concepts earlier and earlier in the educational process.

Looking at Middle Schools and Careers. In 1989, the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation asked the Center for Human Resources at Brandeis University to investigate ways in which schools could stimulate middle-school-aged students and their parents to begin thinking about career options and to pursue higher expectations, whether college, post-high-school training, or skilled jobs after high school graduation. The Clark Foundation has become a leader in the middle school improvement movement through its Middle-Grades Initiative, a multi-year, educational restructuring and improvement project with five urban school systems. In line with that effort, the Foundation was interested in identifying middle-school strategies that would ensure that students entering high school "understand how different curriculums can affect their career and/or post-secondary education options, and ... select programs of study that will enable them to pursue their choices."

During the year that followed, Brandeis staff reviewed commission reports and other literature, talked with experts, and visited middle-grades schools across the country. What they found was a growing awareness of untapped talent – youngsters who could go to college – that was blocked because young people did not believe higher education was possible and had not made decisions that kept their options open. That conclusion was reinforced by evidence from a number of national surveys (see box on page 3). Those surveys indicate that younger adolescents are learning very little about career and educational options and, as a result, are unlikely to choose courses that would encourage higher aspirations. For too many young people, critical information, from negotiating access to higher education, to identifying vocational and employability skills demanded by the changing job market, is usually unavailable or inappropriately presented. And the opportunities for middle-grades students to prepare for the future by testing themselves and developing a sense of personal resourcefulness are few and far between.

At the same time, project staff found that

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Lessons from Middle School Programs

While *Future Options Education* is targeted at students too young to be served by most youth employment programs, the ideas behind FOE are relevant for many youth practitioners and programs. The need for age- and stage-appropriate interventions; the importance of adult support and assistance; the use of experiential and cooperative learning and individualized learning plans; the involvement of community resources to enhance the learning process; and the importance of higher education – these are all principles that can enhance the operations of a broad range of programs, for older and younger youths, in school and out. Many of the evaluation questions aimed at examining Future Options Education efforts could be used to evaluate youth employment initiatives as well.

At the same time, the JTPA system and local youth practitioners have much to offer schools interested in expanding the aspirations of middle-school-aged youth. JTPA has long experience in helping young people make career choices and in developing the pre-employment and work maturity skills many young people need. During the past few years, JTPA programs around the country have also been working on the issues of case management, mentoring, and the integration of workplace skills into basic education. Schools developing Future Options Education strategies could benefit from that experience.

The clearest lesson of Future Options Education, however, is the fact that both schools and youth employment programs have a mutual interest in fostering career awareness and higher aspirations among young people – *all* youth, younger and older, benefit from an improved connection between their current education and training and their options for the future. At the middle school level, as for high school-aged youth, schools and youth employment programs have been moving towards a common agenda. Though joint programs may not always be feasible (because of JTPA's age restrictions, for example), schools and youth employment programs can begin to work together to move that agenda forward: by agreeing on common skills, developing shared curriculum, connecting assessment and case management systems, and building a sequence of internships and work experience so that the community has a coherent, integrated process to help young people move from their early years through high school to higher education or quality employment.

employment and training and school representatives were concerned about building a better foundation for education and career choices and, in some cases, had brought together their knowledge and resources to create approaches likely to be effective with younger teens. These strategies, and the principles behind them, have been combined into an approach known as *Future Options Education* (FOE). The goal of this issue of *Youth Programs* is to provide an introduction to the Future Options Education approach. A fuller description of FOE and additional information about specific program examples and resources can be found in the FOE guide prepared for the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation: *Future Options Education: "Not Another Handbook" Handbook on How to Help Young People in the Middle-Grades Aspire and Achieve*.

What is Future Options Education?

Future Options Education is a framework and a set of principles that combines a sustained, comprehensive, age-and stage-appropriate mix of guidance and counseling with enhanced curricula, supplemental programs, and activities to help young adolescents aspire toward and achieve ambitious goals – especially higher education or training, or quality, skilled jobs. *The basic premise of Future Options Education is that the middle-grades years are not too early for students to start exploring post-high school options, or to gain early work experience.* Indeed, the hope is that students who avail themselves of these options will gain experience that can lead to greater achievement in school and throughout life.

The FOE approach is based on several basic ideas:

- *That career and college preparatory interventions need to be age- and stage-appropriate* The kinds of career awareness and planning strategies that work for older youth are not necessarily appropriate for middle-grades youngsters – and in particular for "at-risk" youngsters. Too often, project staff found that programs for younger adolescents were largely "dumbed down" versions of high school programs. The result was a mismatch between the program and curriculum design and the intellectual and emotional needs of the students.

- *That effective learning strategies for young adolescents need to incorporate the themes of "high expectations, high content, and high support."* One of the fundamental elements of

the Clark Foundation's work on middle-grades school improvement has been the premise that "high expectations for learning, or increased performance outcomes for all children, can be achieved by offering them a high content, relevant, challenging curriculum which stimulates critical thinking and is taught through appropriate [teaching] strategies in a highly supportive school environment." In the case of FOE, strategies are built on the assumption that all students can succeed and should pursue ambitious goals (high expectations); that activities should promote breadth and depth of exposure to career and educational opportunities (high content); and that tough, persistent, close monitoring by and support from knowledgeable, caring adults and institutions is essential for success (high support).

• *That schools and employment programs need not wait for total "school reform" to begin to address these issues.* While a comprehensive approach that ties together the right messages, resources, curricula, and support is needed, important steps can be taken by any school or classroom interested in getting early adolescents to prepare for their futures. And, important steps can be taken by training and employment program practitioners and policy makers to ensure that their efforts are better coordinated with the middle schools and high schools that are preparing these young people for their school-to-school and school-to-work transitions.

• *That there is no "one best approach."* There are tremendous variations among young adolescents, schools and communities; thus, the support systems needed to help 10-to-15 year-olds control their futures must always be contoured to individual circumstances and local realities. Each school's and each program's approach and methods will vary.

Future Options Education is not intended to present a radically new program or a single model. Rather, its goal is to bring together and

Middle School Youth and Careers

Middle school youth (and their families) make educational decisions that affect later education and career options. But relatively few of them have the information about school and work they need to make truly informed decisions.

The largest sample of American 8th graders ever studied -- 23,000 in the National Education Study -- revealed that:

• One-half to two-thirds of eighth graders plan on completing college but only 25% plan on taking college preparatory courses. Many aspire, but few know how to get from "here to there."

• 25% of eighth graders don't know which high school program they will enter.

• 64% of eighth graders have never discussed their future high school program with a counselor. Half haven't discussed their high school plans with a teacher, and 25% have not had this discussion with a father.

A study of middle school students in a mid-west consortium of schools reveals that:

• 74% are learning very little about people's work activities in the next century.

• Approximately one third have little knowledge of the world-of-work in their communities, have not acquired knowledge about different occupations and the changing male/female roles, see little connection between school activities and future work plans, and are learning very little about how to select a career.

• 51% are learning very little about the vocational courses offered in their high school.

Percentage of Eighth Graders Planning to Enroll in Various High School Programs:

29%	College Prep
25%	Don't Know
18%	Vocational
14%	General
5%	Specialized
8%	Other

Source: U.S. Department of Education, NCES, NELS-88.

highlight new combinations of approaches and a context for dealing with young people in the middle-grades. Much of what is included is familiar; the purpose in synthesizing and organizing it is in helping educators and youth practitioners think about how each element can be applied as they increase their efforts with younger adolescents.

Overview of Future Options Education Activities

There are a variety of horizon-broadening activities that enable adolescents and their parents to develop a "consciousness" about the many positive and realistic options available to students after high school. To be successful, however, these activities need to take into consideration the characteristics of young adolescents and their developmental needs. These include the need for:

- Activity-based experiences;
- Self-exploration;
- Adult reinforcement; and
- A sense of belonging to a group.

Research on future options activities that interest middle-grades students showed that young people who considered themselves college-bound were willing to participate in a broad array of activities, including those traditionally offered to eleventh and twelfth graders.

On the other hand, students who identified themselves as vocation-or employment-bound were less interested in the full array of activities. They showed less interest in activities involving reading material on college and financial aid, seeking information and advice from teachers and counselors, and special events such as college fairs and career days. Vocation-bound students did, however, express willingness to use computerized guidance programs and videos to learn more about post-high-school opportunities.

Translating this information into practical activities, Future Options Education can be divided into five topic areas:

- Activities that introduce students to the world of work;
- Activities that show the relationship between post-secondary education or training, and the ability to get an attractive job after high school;
- Activities that introduce some key realities of post-secondary education or training;
- Activities that investigate ways to pay for education or training after high school; and
- Prerequisites: activities that keep the door open for future options.

Activities That Introduce Students To The World Of Work

For young adolescents to pursue ambitious yet realistic career options, they need information about themselves and the labor market. Middle-grades schools can help students consider these issues through regular curricula and/or special programs.

Young adolescents need to know things about themselves. Through interest inventories, values clarification exercises, counseling, role playing, group discussions, and the like, Future Options Education strategies should help students explore and analyze their interests; discuss their attitudes and values and consider how these have been influenced; identify their unique strengths, skills, and aptitudes; and think about how they make decisions.

Young adolescents need to know about the world of work. Activities ranging from career-oriented curricula to videos and career fairs should expose students to the kinds of jobs and careers available, and to the connections between schoolwork and adequate preparation for those jobs. Some of the kinds of information young people need to know includes:

- Why people work;
- The great variety of jobs and careers available, and the education level, pre-requisite skills, and preparation required for them;
- The rapidly changing economy and labor force dynamics;
- Barriers to full participation and ways they can be overcome;
- Transferable skills young people have now that may apply to different jobs;
- High school choices and their implications;
- How people get jobs, and how they keep or lose them;
- Alternative ways people can get training or education needed for different jobs.

Information and its delivery must be age- and stage-appropriate. Programs whose sole purpose is to provide information may be too passive for middle graders. Too often, career awareness takes the form of boring, paper-based information. Moreover, much of the career information available to middle- grades youth appears to be nothing more than "watered down high school stuff." Schools and employment practitioners may need to develop some original, and more appropriate materials. Finally, the kind of information and activities need to be age-appropriate: it is important to remember that middle-grades students do not need to choose a career during their middle-grades years, nor do they need to know how to handle a job interview. Middle-grades students *do* need to get a "ballpark" notion of occupations, skill requirements, earnings potential, and working conditions for various jobs. They *do* need very basic information about the relationship of careers and lifestyles, personal time, and satisfaction. They *do* need horizon-broadening information that shows, for example, that within a hospital, there are more jobs than doctor, nurse, and orderly. But they *do not* need to begin a rigid career track toward a specific occupation.

FOE Activities. Following are some types of activities that can be adapted from the job training system to provide Future Options Education for middle-grades youth:

Job Shadowing Models: Job shadowing enables students to spend some time on the job with an adult worker observing his/her "typical day" and the surrounding work environment, and assisting with a task or two. Job shadowing is also a good way to help teachers keep current on workplace needs.

Enriched (And Monitored) Work Experience Models: This category includes internships, work teams, supervised crew-work, and other variations on jobs appropriate for young adolescents. To be considered "enriched," these programs have classroom components that are tied to the work experience. They feature opportunities for students to gain work experience, to be exposed to adult supervisors and models in a work situation, and to relate their academic learning to the world of work.

Pre-Employment/Work Maturity Models: These approaches introduce young people to the competencies needed to get and retain a quality job. Activities may include world-of-work awareness, basic labor market knowledge, and general occupational information. They may involve elementary career education and decision-making. They may also (indirectly) impart positive work habits, attitudes, and behaviors (punctuality, regular attendance, getting along with and working well with others, etc.) by showing students how school expectations relate to employer expectations.

Curricula for these programs may be available from job training programs found around the country. Many agencies that operate programs with funds from the federal Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), for example, have recently begun redirecting their attention to middle-grades students. Again, however, it is important to emphasize the need for age- and stage-appropriate activities. It is not appropriate, for example, for 13 year old adolescents to be practicing job interview skills when they will not have a chance to use those skills for several years.

Summer Youth Employment Models, or Year-Round Models: These may include special summer (or summer and part-time and holiday) employment opportunities for middle-grades youth, particularly those who are 14 or older. Usually government funded, but not always, these opportunities are often combined with remedial basic skills education.

Pre-Apprenticeship Skills Training: These approaches have the flavor of a short- term "pre-apprenticeship." They expose middle-grades students to certain skilled crafts, and demonstrate the rewards for obtaining journey-level skills in a trade or craft. With young adolescents, close monitoring and supervision is essential, and the students must be shown that the rewards for such positions are worth the special effort.

Community and Neighborhood Service Models: These activities include individual voluntary service and youth-guided services. Young people get experience not only as workers but as citizens. Service programs not only expose young people to the adult world, but give them a sense of the obligations of citizenship in building a more caring, compassionate and competent society. The experience of service to the community is an element perhaps as important as schooling and work.

Youth Entrepreneurship Models: These may include approaches such as Junior Achievement and those promoted by the Joint Council for Economic Education. They give young people experience in and understanding of the business world. They provide hands-on experience in market research, developing a product or service, marketing and advertising to promote consumer interest, and managing the business venture. These models often teach lessons in basic economics, the functioning of the market place, and business management practices.

Activities That Show The Relationship Between Post-Secondary Education Or Training, And The Ability To Get An Attractive Job

This aspect of Future Options Education relates information about occupations to the benefits those occupations afford, and to the educational preparation or training they require. Using workshop presentations and guest speakers, classroom exercises, or one-on-one and group counseling sessions, programs can address such issues as:

- *The myths and realities of acquiring wealth and moving up the economic ladder.*
- *Earnings potential and working conditions for various jobs.*
- *The relationship of careers and lifestyles, personal time, self-esteem and satisfaction.*
- *The types of jobs one can qualify for with:*
  - » less than a 12th-grade education
  - » a high school diploma
  - » post-high-school vocational training
  - » post-high-school proprietary school training
  - » apprenticeships
  - » an associates-degree
  - » a bachelors-degree
  - » a graduate-degree

Through these activities, students and parents can learn that, in today's society, most jobs paying enough to afford an "attractive" lifestyle require some education or training beyond high school. This training or education may not have to be provided by an educational institution – it may be offered by an employer. But regardless of source, post-high-school learning is becoming a necessity.

For many parents, the need for training or education beyond high school is a new concept – representing a significant change from the workforce they entered when manufacturing jobs were plentiful, and simple hard work often paid enough to support a family comfortably. They must let go of the commonly held misconception that "A person can make just as much money with a high school diploma as s/he can with college or additional training."

This aspect of Future Options Education should also include information about the payoffs of post-secondary education or training in dollar terms over a lifetime. For example, many parents may be unaware that college graduates typically earn hundreds of thousands more dollars during a lifetime than someone who doesn't go to college. Although not quite as impressive, post-high- school vocational training also produces significantly higher earnings than can be achieved by somebody who stops school at 12th grade (or earlier).

These activities can also help students and parents consider jobs of the future, and the importance of education and training as a prerequisite for the majority of them. Students and parents should receive information about types of college and vocational training programs, the differences between degree and certificate programs, and between liberal arts education and career training. The general criteria to be considered in choosing a school or program, admissions requirements, and admissions processes are also described.

Finally, through guest speakers and workshops, these activities can repeatedly expose middle-grades students to people with whom they can identify who have benefitted from education or training after high school. Students hear from, and spend time with, graduates of post-high-school education and training programs (especially individuals from backgrounds similar to theirs), and learn how those individuals have overcome obstacles and achieved educational goals.

Activities That Introduce Some Key Realities Of Post-Secondary Education Or Training

This aspect of Future Options Education is designed to overcome several common myths about school and college, and to produce a clearer picture of what college or training after high school are really like. It is appropriate for all middle-grades students. But, it is especially needed by students who have potential to succeed, but might be unlikely to finish high school or further their education without special attention.

A major focus of this segment is to help students and parents understand the differences between the middle-grades or high school, and post-secondary education or training. They need to know that education and training after high school are often less structured and offer students more choices – as well as the chance to focus upon their particular (as well as new) interests.

A second goal is to counter discouraging messages – from peers, parents, other adults, the media, and even teachers – that may make students think that they are incapable of undertaking post-secondary education, training, or skilled employment. Students need to receive affirmation from adults and peers whom they respect that they have the potential to achieve these goals. Students and parents also need to know that, given effort, nearly any determined individual can successfully pursue and succeed in education or training beyond high school.(Many schools, vocational training programs, and corporations offer tutors, writing centers, study-skills courses, and other assistance for their students or employees.)

The third major goal is to nurture and support students' educational aspirations, talents, and motivation. In simple terms, to provide feedback to students letting them know they are capable. Activities may include communication to parents about their child's potential and what parents can do to support the child's development, outreach by teachers and counselors to encourage the student's participation in Future Options activities, and referrals to special after-school and summer enrichment programs.

Options and Activities. As above, there are a number of ways in which schools and youth programs can begin to help young people learn about post-secondary options. They range from holding school-wide events (Career Awareness weeks) to enhancing the school's or program's guidance functions (providing more career/college information; adding career counseling software; or designating a "Future Options Information Counselor) to developing a program of site visits to colleges and training schools followed by class papers and discussions. What is important, however, is to recognize that this aspect of Future Options Education is more than just occasional "activities." It is about providing information and making connections between aspirations and schooling on an ongoing basis.

Enhancing Students' Self-Esteem. Much of a student's perception about his/her ability to attend college comes down to the issue of self-esteem. Self-esteem is not improved through an occasional workshop on the subject; rather, it is developed through regular successes and positive feedback from a wide variety of sources over extended periods of time. People working with young adolescents need to understand their developmental needs and take them into consideration in designing their programs and activities. (See the box on page 8.)

Activities That Investigate Ways To Pay For Education Or Training After High School

Many middle-grades students and their parents hold common misconceptions about the costs of education or training after high school.

"College/Training is Too Expensive." Many students and parents tend to see all post-secondary educational institutions as very expensive. Unfortunately, much of people's "knowledge" of post-secondary education or training is based on media reports about the costs of college or vocational training, and about cuts in financial aid. For example, a recent Gallup poll found that most high school students think that college costs three times as much as it actually does.

Many parents fail to distinguish among elite private colleges, four year public colleges, community colleges, or vocational training schools. They also do not realize that there are billions of public financial aid dollars available.

"I Have to Work." In addition, students and parents are unaware that working does not preclude post-secondary education or training. They need to know about part-time study opportunities, cooperative education, and other possibilities for combining work and training.

"College is Years Away." Too often, parents and students assume they do not need to deal with college planning until the junior year of high school.

The Real Costs of Education and Training. In response to these myths, Future Options Education strategies need to provide information about the realities of education and training costs, and about how families can meet them. Through workshops, meetings with parents, and individual planning and counseling, schools and youth programs can introduce parents to the types of financial aid available, who is eligible,

and how it is awarded. They can explore the basis on which colleges and training programs determine the amount they expect families to contribute toward their children's education, as well as the concepts of need-based and merit-based aid. Parents can be alerted to the possibility that they may have to borrow, and informed about the differences between educational and consumer loans.

Future Options programs can also help families learn about steps they can take to begin planning for education/training costs during the middle-grades. They can consider ways to develop a savings plan appropriate for their income level and provide specific information on various investment/savings tools available to families. Perhaps most important, parents need to receive repeated reassurance that sufficient financial aid exists to make education or training after high school a realistic possibility for even the lowest income student.

Providing Financial Incentives for Achievement. A large number of middle-grades and high schools around the country have gone beyond informational activities and developed very creative financial incentive programs. These may include scholarship funds for academic achievement that guarantee a college education to young people who stay in school and meet certain academic and civic standards. Or they may use "pay for grades" approaches and other scholarship incentives to encourage adolescents to complete college applications and go on to college.

Many of these are developed in partnership with post-secondary education institutions. These efforts often consist of tuition guarantees linked to middle-grades academic achievement. These programs are based on the assumption that guaranteeing tuition scholarships to students in the middle-grades will motivate them to undertake the rigors of a college preparatory program in high school. Incentives may be offered to all students in a school district, a particular grade, or to a group specifically defined as "underachievers" – youth identified by school staff as needing special support.

Notes on Early Adolescence

We know that young adolescents need to try a wide variety of roles. Yet, to make them a manageable lot, we contain and limit them. We rarely expose them to the wide variety of adult roles.

We know that young adolescents vary enormously in physical, mental, and emotional maturity, and in capability. Yet, in schools, chronological age is still the overwhelming factor used in grouping students.

We know that during early adolescence, the development of control over one's own life through conscious decision making is crucial. Yet adults make nearly all meaningful decisions for almost all young adolescents – almost all the time. Of course, we do give them the "freedom" to make "safe" decisions.

We know that early adolescence is an age where natural forces (muscular, intellectual, glandular, emotional) are causing precipitous peaks and troughs. Yet we demand internal consistency.

We know that young adolescents need space and experience to "be" different persons at different times. Yet we expect them to "be" what they said they were last week.

We know that young adolescents are preoccupied by physical and sexual concerns, and are frightened by their perceived inadequacy. Yet we operate with them each day as if such concerns did not exist at all.

We know that young adolescents need a distinct feeling of present importance, a present relevancy of their own lives now. Yet we place them in institutions called "junior high schools" which stress out-of-hand their subordinate status to their next maturational stage; and then, feed them a diet of watered down "real stuff"...

Adapted from: Joan Lipsitz in *Growing Up Forgotten: A Review of the Research and Programs Concerning Early Adolescence*, New Brunswick, Transaction Books, 1980, Chapter 2, Page 83.

Prerequisites: Activities That Keep The Door Open For Attractive Future Options

Tying the various Future Options Education strategies together are efforts to ensure that students are able to translate improved career and college awareness into the necessary academic performance. Three broad types of activities fall under this heading:

Early Awareness. Early awareness activities make explicit the importance of middle-grades education as a vehicle for attaining future career and lifestyle goals. Students and parents learn what students must do, academically, during the middle-grades years to enhance their chances of qualifying for post- secondary education, training, and/or attractive jobs. Activities stimulate students to seek new experiences that will prepare them to achieve long-term goals.

As part of this process (preferably done before, or at least early in, the student's middle-grades years), Future Options Education looks at "tracking." Activities help students and parents better understand the differences among general, vocational, and academic programs – and their ramifications for the student's future.

Easing The School-To-School Transition. There are also "bridge" models provided in the last year of the middle-grades. At the student level, these are orientation programs that tell middle-grades youngsters what they can expect when they go to high school, and help them choose appropriate high schools and programs. At the administrative and management information system (MIS) level, these are approaches in which efforts are made to have every student develop a plan that informs educational choices in high school. A common "bridge model" event targeted to middle-grades students and their parents is the "high school fair" at which they can talk with representatives of the various high schools in their district.

Enrichment Activities. Also within this "Prerequisites" category are "Enrichment Activities." These help students improve their academic performance so that they are better prepared to pursue ambitious post-high- school goals. Enrichment activities are usually academic "booster" programs (such as tutoring, computer-based learning, or after-school advanced-placement activities) that augment students' regular classroom experiences.

Some enrichment programs are remedial in their approach, providing assistance with the "3-Rs" and vocational skill-building. These are usually targeted to students who are achieving below their potential, and/or have been assigned to a general track. Students participate in activities that help them improve their basic skills enough so that they can advance out of that track. Goals might encompass building academic skills, motivation, and self- confidence. These activities usually take place over a sustained period of time – months or even years – and sometimes involve a summer component of one to four weeks.

Other enrichment activities may have a special "enhancement" function. They may focus on a student's particular academic interest, providing "accelerated" activities focusing on advanced learning in that area of interest. (It is common for this type of activity to prepare students for careers requiring mathematics or science backgrounds).

Individual Planning and Support

The activities outlined above represent the starting point and core of a Future Options Education strategy. But successfully helping middle-school-aged youth to aspire and achieve also requires a system of assessment, planning, and support. Consequently, in addition to the basic education and awareness activities, Future Options Education incorporates three additional elements: personalized adult attention, individualized assessment, and development of a Future Options Education Plan.

Personalized Adult Attention

A common difference between young people who stumble, and those who work their way through the obstacle course of adolescence, is the presence and regular support of a caring adult. This adult can help the young person overcome the many barriers that will crop up between the middle-grades years and the achievement of his/her post-high-school goals.

According to the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, "Every student should be well-known to at least one adult. Students should be able to rely on that adult to help learn from their experiences, comprehend physical changes and changing relations with family and peers, act on their behalf to marshal every school and community resource needed for the student to succeed, and help to fashion a promising vision of the future."

In most families this role is played by a parent or close relative; however, too often it is lacking. For young adolescents, there is a clear need to assure that it is provided – if not

through family, then perhaps through a school-appointed advisor or a community-provided mentor.

A Support System of Adults is a Necessary Part of the Scaffolding that Bolsters Future Options Education. They provide the necessary assistance and oversight to elevate many adolescents above the strong peer pressure and pull toward mediocrity exerted by disadvantaged neighborhoods. They can help offset the lure of more lucrative, and more dangerous, illegal or underground pursuits many of which are glamorized by television and the media. While many school staff can and do provide this support – teachers, advisors, administrators, etc. – Future Options Education is a multi-faceted team approach calling for the talent, time, and resources of parents, school personnel and departments, and community institutions. To the extent that schools network with "outside" partnerships community-based organizations, government-funded programs (such as JTPA), business organizations, and volunteers – they expand the resources available to work with their students.

Following are three common strategies (parent involvement models, advisory models, and mentoring models) that assure each student a relationship with a caring adult, and that coordinate the actions and activities of other adults and institutions.

Parent Involvement Models. Parents represent a critical resource and partner for the Future Options Education effort. Children who see their parents taking an active interest in their schools behave better and perform better in school. And parents who take an active interest in schools are far better able to support the school mission in the home because they understand it and have rapport with the school staff. The active involvement of a student's parent(s) in school can also dramatically improve the academic performance of a student who previously has not done well. It can also raise the expectations the parents have for their children's education.

Research has also documented that parental preference is the most important factor in students' plans for post-high-school education or training. This fact holds true for all students regardless of family income or racial/ethnic group.

Research on parents of students in the middle-grades also indicates a much higher level of interest in information about post-high-school planning than is found among the students themselves. In one study, more than three-fourths of all parents said they would be willing to participate in various "early awareness" activities as compared with just under half of the students surveyed. Nine out of ten parents expressed an interest in encouraging their children to spend more time studying to improve their grades, talking with their children about plans for education after high school, and exploring with their children the jobs they might be able to get after completing post- secondary education or training.

Enlisting Parental Support and Participation Requires a Special Effort. Educators have observed that even parents who have been active during their children's elementary school years (for example, the suburban parent who sponsors bake sales, volunteers in the library, helps with science fair projects, attends parent-teacher conferences) are less likely to remain involved when their children reach adolescence. In the inner-city, this idealistic example may be all too rare. There may be a variety of reasons for the lack of parental involvement – some practical, some psychological, others socio-economic – that must be understood and addressed. Some typical reasons include:

- Most parents work full-time or have considerable family responsibilities, and school-related events are scheduled at inconvenient times;

- Their own children discourage their attention (It's not "cool" to have parents who pay too much attention);

- They may have more difficulty understanding their children and their needs when they reach adolescence;

- They may feel that their lack of formal education will be embarrassing if they try to communicate with teachers at grade levels exceeding their own limited education;

- They have been told that their children should function more independently, so they intentionally keep a low profile;

- They find that the number of teachers they must deal with in the middle- grades usually multiplies. In contrast to elementary school, there is no longer a single teacher who they can contact, and it becomes logistically difficult to coordinate and meet with seven or eight teachers;

- They are unsure of how they can be of help;

- They are uncertain whether the schools want their participation and assistance.

Strategies for Involving Parents. Parent involvement has become the cornerstone of many current schemes to reform public education. The major lesson to emerge from those efforts is that parents need to know that their participation is vital and welcome.

Schools can empower parents in many ways: creating a welcoming environment, using a multi-cultural approach, establishing formal programs for parental involvement, and being clear about ways parents can help. Furthermore, schools can foster a general sense of community that makes parents more aware of their responsibilities.

Parents can be brought into the school during regular school hours, on Saturdays, or after school. Or "school may be brought to the parents" through home visits. A school might provide seminars on parenting skills, develop initiatives to improve literacy among family members, or involve parents in providing career and higher education information to their children. With the school's help, parents can become empowered, willing, and knowledgeable enough to feel welcome to help their children and others directly.

Some of the key elements of an effective parental involvement strategy include:

- Share the School's Mission and Goals
- Develop a Future Options Education Logo or Symbol
- Make the School a Welcoming Place
- Send Messages Home
- Understand "Multi-Cultural Needs"
- Offer Workshops for Parents
- Involve Parents in Classroom Presentations
- Create a Future Options Resource Corner
- Introduce Role Models into Adolescents' Lives
- Use the Parents' Association to Promote Future Options Education
- Above All Else, Strengthen Family-School Communication

Advisory Models. These are models that pair a student, or small groups of students, with an adult within the school. Advisors work with the students to help them develop their plans and their goals, and keep things moving in the right direction by assisting at critical junctures.

"Advisor-Advisee" programs, the most common version of Advisory models, are not a new concept to staff and decision-makers in most middle-grades schools. It's not difficult to understand why advisorship has become a highly touted strategy, especially when so many students are now being labeled "at-risk." Young adolescents need someone who they can count upon to be regularly available, to monitor their progress and intervene when necessary, and to offer support. The theory behind these programs fulfills these needs by calling for consistency, support and advocacy for every student.

Adapting The Advisory Role to a Future Options Education Context. Advisor- Advisee models can be adapted to support Future Options Education. To do so, the focus of the "advisor" needs to be expanded to include increased emphasis on career education and on post-secondary education and training. The advisor also takes on an expanded role as broker and coordinator of Future Options Education activities, many of which will be provided by other staff. For the sake of clarity, an advisor in this expanded role will be called the "Primary Advisor."

Ideally, each student would be linked with an in-school adult, the Primary Advisor, who is responsible for helping the student design and carry out a Future Options Education Plan. This Primary Advisor will stick with the student across grades and subject areas. Ideally, this person will also remain as the student's Primary Advisor over several school years, although we recognize that in some systems this will not be possible. A Primary Advisor ought to be in contact with guidance staff at local high schools, so that students' Future Options Plans can be continued after students graduate from the middle-grades.

A Partner. At the middle level, the Primary Advisor works in partnership with the student, teachers, and school personnel to assure that the student is assessed, and to interpret assessment data. The Primary Advisor, or somebody to whom s/he delegates the task, spends time with the student, and often with family, reviewing assessment data, and helping the student formulate a Future Options Plan. As part of Plan development, the Primary Advisor works with the student and family to determine which among a variety of single and multi-year activities and services the student needs, helps the student determine when and in what order those activities and services should occur, and helps the student find and access those activities and services.

A Broker. In some schools, the Primary Advisor acts as a broker – intervening in the school – advocating and linking to assure that the student's needs are met. The Advisor helps the student access the classes, activities, resources, and services called for in the Future Options Education Plan. He or she integrates and coordinates the interventions, and ensures accountability of the student, other advisors, and other school personnel. The Primary Advisor may occasionally serve as a problem-solver, intervening at key junctures. Over the long-run, he or she advocates for the student's interests with the school's teaching team, and helps the student adjust to changes in personnel. Ideally, the Primary Advisor also helps assure that everyone's contribution to a given student is driven by a common philosophy. In the more ambitious Advisory models, the Primary Advisor may also link with a community advocate who can help the student gain access to supports provided by organizations outside the school.

A Trouble-Shooter. As the student advances through the various aspects of his/her plan, the Primary Advisor monitors, or assures that somebody monitors, the student's progress, and assesses the effectiveness of each intervention. The Advisor offers support, as needed, to help the student succeed; and generally assures that the Future Options Education Plan is thoughtfully revised as circumstances and interests change. Without this personal, ongoing help, students can too easily "fall between the cracks." Over the long run, a Primary Advisor assures that a safety net is there when needed.

The Primary Advisor often operates as a generalist, alternately serving as a friend, a surrogate parent, a role model, a drill sergeant, a teacher, a crisis counselor. The Primary Advisor may nag, cajole, prod, instruct, and encourage each student who is under his/her wing. S/he may link a student with a teacher in another department, and monitor a young person's relationship with that teacher.

A Behavior Modifier. But beyond mediating and representing the interests of a student, the Primary Advisor may also seek to alter the student's behavior, strengthening his/her capacity to exercise self-determination, decision-making and autonomy. To be effective at these functions, the Primary Advisor needs to establish a relationship of partnership and mutual respect with the student. The Primary Advisor helps the student relate actions to outcomes, and expects the student to share the responsibility for carrying out his/her parts of the Plan. While it would be ideal if each Primary Advisor had only one student with whom s/he played this role, the logistics of such a small "case-load" would be impractical. Therefore, Primary Advisors are usually assigned responsibility for a reasonable number of students, given local conditions and workloads.

Mentoring Models. Mentoring programs pair individual students with caring, mature adults from the community. Mentoring is an approach that is increasingly being called upon as a way to fulfill the need for adult support among young people who do not receive adequate guidance from other family or institutional systems. Indeed, mentoring programs are probably the most widely used activity for supporting students who have academic potential but have been identified as "at-risk" of not completing school.

The concept of mentoring is an age-old tradition. In colonial times and even later in America, and for centuries in Europe, townspeople took into their home boys and girls who trained as apprentices in the trades and crafts, servants in the larger homes, and clerks in businesses. It was the responsibility of the people in the community to train the youths and usually to house, feed and clothe them as well. In fact, until about 50 years ago, it was more common than not for families in America to have at least one non-family member living with them. Though seemingly forgotten in recent years, bringing up the young has historically been viewed as a community responsibility.

While not a "required" element of a Future Options Education initiative, mentoring can serve as one component in a comprehensive, intensive program of intervention in the lives of adolescent students that helps schools and students meet Future Options Education goals. Mentors supplement and support the work of the Primary Advisor – they do not take the place of this person.

What Mentors Do. A mentor works one-on-one with a student over time, usually with a focus of helping him/her achieve a pre- defined set of goals that are clearly stated at the beginning of the relationship.

Mentoring activities vary depending on the interests, needs, and goals of the students and the mentor. A mentor may work with the student to help overcome barriers that endanger the student's school career or keep him/her from going on to higher education. A mentor may

help the student explore careers, or take the student on college visits or to cultural activities. A mentor may offer support, tutoring, guidance and concrete experience to help the student succeed and reach his/her potential in school. Sometimes mentors serve as advocates for students when problems arise that interfere with their school participation.

The mentor and student may meet weekly or monthly, and usually maintain regular telephone contact. There also may be occasional group activities organized by the coordinator of the mentoring program, including "achievement breakfasts" and special occasions to which parents are invited.

Where Today's Mentors Are Found. While Primary Advisors are most often associated with the school, mentors can be found in businesses, civic and community based organizations, colleges, voluntary agencies, retirement centers, and other local organizations.

Anyone with time for mentoring and a concern for young people can be involved. They usually volunteer or receive a stipend to help students one-on- one. While it is preferable that mentors be from backgrounds similar to the students with whom they are paired, there have been many successful mentors whose backgrounds differ from the students assigned to them.

Recruitment is often handled through personal contacts and individual referrals – generally the most time-consuming, but most effective methods. Another effective technique is to find a community leader to "champion" mentoring. Sites with a strong committed champion have a relatively painless time finding a good pool of prospective mentors.

Recruitment works well when a school hooks up with a cohesive adult organization - for example: a local university, a business group, a church group, a civic association, a community-based organization or a professional club. It is crucial that this organization have the commitment and capacity to recruit, train, and match participants. In addition, the organization should monitor their progress and provide support as needed. It is helpful for the organization to have linkages with institutions of higher education, foundations and other community resources.

What It Takes To Operate an Effective Mentoring Program. Although mentoring initiatives are not always school-based, one usually finds that in schools, mentoring is a department-, house- or school-wide undertaking. It is not an activity teachers undertake alone. Rather, it is a team effort in which parents, the student's advisor, teachers, the principal and the mentor work together with the student on the student's behalf.

As in any important and large scale partnership, mentoring programs require adequate time for planning tasks such as targeting and enrolling potential students; recruiting, orienting and training potential mentors; and communicating with school officials, including advisors, teachers, and principals. Program start-up also requires close attention to support the mentor-student relationships.

Effective mentoring programs require coordination and training of mentors. They call for communication with the family of each student to ensure that they understand the goal of the mentor relationship and trust the individual with whom their child is paired. They need to be part of a tightly run, closely monitored program combining in-school learning, orientation to high school and college, and a Primary Advisor who carefully tracks the relationship.

Traits of an Effective Mentor. There is no single "model" of a "good" mentor. Different mentors have different qualities. Regardless of age or experience, mentors must be carefully screened to ensure they are willing to make the necessary time commitment, that they genuinely like young people and enjoy their company, have good interpersonal skills, patience and persistence, and have a realistic expectation about the experience and the effort required. New mentors need orientation in program objectives and how to work with adolescents.

Assessment and Planning

The two keys to a successful Future Options Education strategy are individualized assessment and the development of an individual Future Options Education Plan. A thorough assessment enables the student, his/her teachers, the Primary Advisor, and all of the other stakeholders to understand where the student is starting from, and to measure how s/he is progressing at any point in time. Through ongoing assessment, key adults can hear, see, and sense a student's situation. They learn who the student is, what strengths can be worked with, what vulnerabilities must be compensated for, and what progress is being made. The responses to such information can then be tailor-made to that particular student.

The Future Options Education Plan picks up the information gained through the assessment process and translates it into a strategically sequenced series of action steps. A well-formulated Plan details a series of mutual, coordinated actions on the part of the student and several supportive adults that exploit the student's strengths and overcome his/her deficits on the way to meeting the student's goals. Viewed as a flexible, ever-changing document, sets a direction and forms the basis for a successful Future Options Education program.

Elements of A Comprehensive Assessment. A Future Options Education assessment should be designed to answer two basic questions: initially, "Where do we start with this particular student," and then, as time passes, "Where is the student now and what progress has been made." To answer those questions successfully, the assessment needs to gather information on the student's knowledge and abilities, but also on his or her goals and interests, strengths and barriers. Some of the kinds of issues an assessment might address include the following:

Short- and Long-Term Goals. We can assume that nearly all middle-grades students will benefit from activities that "broaden their horizons" – introducing them to options they didn't know existed, creating new dreams, and putting current ones into perspective. To provide a feel for how extensive interventions for a student must be, assessment might probe the student's aspirations: What does the student want to do with his/her life? What "little things" and "big things" does s/he want? Is a skilled job and/or post-high- school education/training among those goals? If not, why?

Knowledge of the Labor Market. Most young adolescents have little understanding about opportunities available to them in the adult labor market, and about the relationship between education and job prospects. Some may have parents who do not work. Their own occupational knowledge may derive primarily from television. Those middle-grades youth with "traditional" work experience have usually done baby-sitting, delivered newspapers, mowed lawns, or other had other temporary "ad hoc" jobs – none of which provide much in the way of introductions to the adult labor market. Unfortunately, some young adolescents have had significant experience with "non-traditional jobs" in the underground economy (drug-dealing, selling "hot" goods, etc.) – experiences that may provide transferable skills, but are not the types of adult jobs we'd like them to pursue.

Assessment can help us understand what young people perceive about the labor market, their place in it, and the role of education in their lives. From this information, we can help students make educated, non-limiting decisions about their futures.

Knowledge of the Realities of Post-Secondary Education and Training. Many students assume that college or post-high-school training is out of the question. We also know that a good percentage of these students should not make this assumption. Other students say that they want to go to college, but have not the faintest idea about what it takes to do so. If we are to enable young people to realistically pursue their potential, we need to know what types of interventions each student needs:

- Does the student assume that s/he will eventually pursue education or training after high school?
- Does the student understand what must be done during middle grades and high school in order to make that possible?
- What does the student think post-secondary education is like or how it differs from middle school or high school?
- Are the student and his/her family aware that financial aid may be available for college or post-secondary training?
- Does the student grasp how current actions, choices and decisions affect his/her chances for post-secondary education and training down the road?
- What kinds of interventions would help expand the student's understanding of post-secondary options and develop realistic goals?

Educational Strengths and Needs. If a student is to eventually attain the goal of a skilled job or education/training after high school, s/he will need to pursue and achieve (at both the middle-grades and high school levels) a course of study leading to that goal. Assessment can help identify what the student will have to do during the middle-grades years to open, or keep open, these post-secondary options.

Talents and Interests. Most young people are armed with an array of talents, although many may be unrecognized or dormant. Assessment can identify some of these, and may reveal previously unknown strengths enroute to helping

a young person pursue new and exciting goals. What has the young person been doing so far to "get by" in the world? What is the young person proud of or good at? What excites him or her? How do these skills and interests relate to his/her goals, and are there others that s/he would like to develop?

Existing Support Network and Environmental Barriers. Young adolescents need the support and guidance of adults and peers to recognize and pursue their full potential. Certainly some of this can come from the school system; however, as we all know, the schools can't do it alone. A solid assessment process identifies adults and peers who can play a positive role in the Future Options Education process, and pinpoints negative environmental influences.

Assistance Needed from the Human Service System. Some young adolescents face obstacles to personal fulfillment that require interventions from organizations or professionals outside the school. Assessment can pinpoint these situations, and can contribute to improved school performance among young people who are given outside help.

How the assessment should be conducted is a decision that should be made locally: who conducts the assessment, what kind of process is used to collect information, who is responsible for coordinating the process and assuring that a thorough assessment gets done. Assessment is an art rather than a science, and there is no single tool or technique that works in all situations. There are, however, two basic guidelines that should be kept in mind. First, assessment information can be collected in many different ways: through personal discussions and interviews with students, talks with teachers, input from knowledgeable adults, self-awareness classroom or group exercises, etc. While assessment may involve testing, much of the information will be better gathered in other ways.

Second, assessment must involve and engage the youngster – it should be done *with* rather than *to* the student. At the very least, a Future Options Plan should not be developed until a knowledgeable adult has reviewed and interpreted assessment data with the student, and the student has concurred that it presents a relatively representative and accurate picture.

Developing a Future Options Education Plan. The issue of developing a plan for a middle school student is fraught with challenges. Who develops the plan? Who tracks progress? Who has access to the information? How do you ensure confidentiality, and yet ensure that the important information reaches the parties who may be able to help the student? How do you keep it from becoming a bureaucratic paper exercise? How do you keep the plan from "tracking" the student toward certain options, and precluding others? All of these questions and concerns are very real – they are all matters to be worked out in implementation. And, solutions abound. The rewards outweigh the potential costs and inconveniences.

A Well-Formulated Plan. Ideally, a Future Options Plan is a comprehensive, ever- changing document that flows directly from regular assessments of the student. It should be developed by a team that includes not only the student and his/her Primary Advisor, but also teachers, counselors, family members, and other key individuals (mentors, role models, valued peers, etc.). It should establish individualized, age- and stage-appropriate interventions that address a variety of students' needs, and assure continuity between the middle-grades and high school. The Plan defines through what means and over what period of time action steps will be implemented. It also identifies who will be responsible for carrying out and monitoring its various components.

The goals of a comprehensive Future Options Plan tie directly back to assessment. As such, they might include:

- identifying and developing short- and long-term goals;
- enhancing knowledge of the labor market;
- enhancing knowledge of post-secondary education and training;
- developing educational strengths and overcoming needs;
- identifying and supporting talents and interests;
- utilizing existing support networks and overcoming environmental barriers;
- identifying needs for help from the human service system, and linking the student with that system's resources;
- revising everything above as changes occur.

Timing of the Plan. Ideally, development of the Future Options Plan starts when a student enters the middle-grades. However, the Plan is not set in stone. It must be flexible. The Plan must be reviewed and revised regularly to allow for the

many changes that can be expected as the student learns more, advances, encounters barriers, or alters his/her goals. The Plan also does not stop at the end of the middle-grades. It needs to include the transition to high school too.

Engaging Students in Plan Development. Some middle-grades students will be excited about Future Options Education and development of a Future Options Plan. On the other hand, there will be others who, for good reason, will view a Future Options Plan as one more in a string of nonsense steps that lead nowhere. They will not automatically treat the Plan seriously.

This cynicism can and should be overcome through involvement and ownership. A student will be motivated to channel his/her energy into the Future Options Plan over the long-term only if the student feels that the Plan is his or hers. It must sufficiently represent his/her personal self-interest. It cannot be a paper exercise where the adults maintain control and "do to" the student.

The student must play an active, empowered role – identifying and selecting available resources, programs, and activities that lead to his/her personal goals. For a student to make an informed decision about these interventions, the advisor should discuss and seek consensus on each aspect of the Plan.

It is important that the student and all other parties understand their roles and responsibilities in carrying out the Future Options Plan. Therefore, when the student, his/her Primary Advisor, his/her parents, and other key individuals have discussed and agreed upon a series of action steps, the Plan should be signed by all as if it were a contract. This Contract may be a separate document, or may merely be signatures by all parties on the bottom of the Plan itself. This step helps ensure clarity, accountability, and mutuality. Inherent in the contract should be agreement about what happens if the Plan falls apart or if the contract is broken.

Putting the Plan into Action. Once the student has made his/her decisions, the advisor helps to gain access to the chosen options, and makes referrals to other organizations if necessary. After a student has been placed into an activity, program, or service, the advisor monitors the placement to assure that it satisfies the goals set forth in the student's Future Options Plan. If the student is unable to achieve the specified goals through [illegible] placement, the advisor helps to review and adjust the Plan.

The Future Options Plan

A Future Options Plan may include items such as:

- the student's goals, strengths, interests, and limitations;
- knowledge-enhancement activities pertaining to skilled jobs and post-secondary education or training;
- exploratory activities that allow the student to grow, and contribute to changes in the Plan;
- other resources, classes, interventions, and activities that the student has chosen to assist him/her reach goals;
- skills the student must learn if s/he is to take control of his/her Plan while reducing dependence upon the Advisor;
- the sequence in which activities or interventions should take place;
- the individual(s) or organization(s) that will provide those resource, classes, interventions, or activities;
- starting dates, times, ongoing schedules, locations, etc. of activities or services in which the student will participate;
- an orientation to local high school offerings;
- the tasks and responsibilities of the student; the Primary Advisor; parents, family members, and significant others;
- the tasks and responsibilities of teachers and other individuals at the middle-grades level;
- a schedule for subsequent contacts between Primary Advisor, student, parents, and others;
- a schedule upon which the Plan will be reviewed;
- an agreement about what happens if one of the parties breaks his/her end of the contract;
- rewards, incentives, or celebrations that acknowledge achievement of goals.
- an agreement with high schools to "pick-up" the Plan when a student moves onto the high school of his/her choice.

Implementing Future Options Education

As in all human resource programs, particularly the more comprehensive approaches, effective planning is essential. There is no one "correct" way to design and implement a Future Options Education initiative. These functions should be based upon local decisions and local needs. However, a general planning framework can increase the chances of a school developing an effective, manageable initiative over time. These steps include:

Forming an Initial Planning Team. Regardless of size, a Future Options Education initiative will certainly cross departmental, school and community boundaries. For individuals from different areas to work together, mutual agreement is needed on the problems or unmet needs. It is conceivable that Future Options Education will be viewed as one part of a larger school improvement effort; hence, this group might be part of a larger planning committee, or the initiative itself might be one agenda item for a school improvement planning committee. This initial planning team can chart the directions of the Future Options Education effort.

Defining Students' Future Options Needs. Regardless of structure, this group must define the issues, and communicate those issues to other people. A first step might involve collecting and analyzing information through a needs assessment and inventory of existing programs and services. This information should be synthesized into a form that everyone can understand. Patterns of information that appear regularly across sources are especially important. This synthesis defines the real Future Options Education needs of local middle- grades students, and establishes a commonly-shared knowledge base.

Setting Goals. Another step is to decide the mission or purpose that will "drive" the Future Options Education initiative. From this mission flows a set of goals that stem from the needs analysis.

Determining What Interventions Are Needed. The planning team determines which services, resources, and other activities or options might be needed by their students. Throughout this process, it is important that the planning team try to develop a coordinated, logically-sequenced set of activities that fulfill each of the initiative's goals.

Communicating This Information to Others. One way or another, background information about the Future Options Education initiative must be made available to a variety of people. An important vehicle for conveying such information is a short information-piece that clearly and succinctly imparts the "vision" behind the initiative, its target population, its mission, its goals, and its potential benefits.

Inventorying School and Community Resources. The level of sophistication of any Future Options Education initiative ultimately rests upon an assessment of ability to leverage and apply necessary resources. It would be futile to develop a complex plan of activities and interventions if neither the school nor the community have the capacity to carry out the plan.

Identifying Other People Who Must Be Involved. Just because resources exist in a community doesn't necessarily mean that the individuals who control them will be cooperative with the Future Options effort. In nearly all cases, it will be necessary to involve those people in the planning process. Soliciting that involvement may require considerable persuasion and negotiation. A general rule governing who to involve in any initiative that crosses departmental and institutional boundaries is that one should bring in as many players as possible from inside and outside the school. This includes parents and students.

Bringing In and Orienting the Key Players. Before approaching individuals to solicit their support or involvement, the planning team should analyze possible benefits of participation for each person or institution whose involvement is needed, and should develop a "sales pitch" that will be used to attract them. The data supporting Future Options Education should be explained to all players, and they should be shown how the initiative will address the student needs set forth in that data. Players will also need to be oriented to what the planning team has done so far in developing the initiative. The planning team will need to work with these new players to review, if necessary revise, and ratify the mission and goals.

Developing a Plan of Action. Creation of a comprehensive action plan will require the identification of key priorities, tasks to be done, timeframes, roles and responsibilities. The plan should anticipate likely barriers and provide

strategies for overcoming them. The plan should clearly define decision making authority and accountability. And, of course, the plan must include an appropriate and realistic budget.

Implementing the Plan. The plan will need to be communicated to everyone who will "touch" the initiative. It also sets the stage by which the expertise- needs of the initiative can be matched with individuals and/or institutions. Key players will need to identify peers and subordinates who will need to be involved, determine in what (implementing) capacity, and identify for how many hours each week and for how long a period.

Evaluating Future Options Education

As communities begin to put a Future Options Education strategy into place, they need to look at their progress toward their goals and the result of their efforts. Three broad questions can guide that evaluation effort:

- *Are We Doing Future Options Education?*
- *Do We Have A Quality Initiative?*
- *Is Our Approach Working?*

The column to the right suggests some of the specific questions that evaluation effort should include. Taken together, they provide not only a guide for looking at Future Options Education efforts, but at many other educational initiatives aimed at younger adolescents as well.

Conclusion

As the introduction to this article suggested, there is little in Future Options Education that is new or unique. Pieces of the Future Options approach are happening day in and day out in schools, community agencies, and youth employment programs across the country. What is new is the application of some of these ideas to younger adolescents, and the effort to bring them together in a more systematic approach.

Copies of the full version of Future Options Education: "Not Another Handbook" Handbook on How to Help Young People in the Middle-Grades Aspire and Achieve *can be ordered at a cost of $15 per copy by writing Joan Walsh, Heller Graduate School, Brandeis University, P.O. Box 9110, Waltham, Massachusetts 02254-9110 or calling 1-800-343-4705.*

Evaluating Future Options Education

The following represents a tool or general questionnaire that may help in analyzing a Future Options Education effort.

Are We Doing Future Options Education?

This aspect of evaluation focuses primarily on management and process. It investigates whether a school has put together the necessary pieces to create a Future Options Education initiative. The questions to be answered in a process evaluation should relate directly back to the goals and objectives of the school's Future Options Education initiative. The evaluation might address such questions as:

Are we assuring high support by providing personal adult help to each student?

- ☐ Do we offer some vehicle(s) through which at least one knowledgeable adult (trained parent, primary advisor, mentor, etc.) is always available to assist each student with his/her personal goals?
- ☐ Do we acknowledge uniqueness by assessing each student at the outset?
- ☐ Do we assist each student to identify unique strengths, talents, interests, weaknesses, and barriers?
- ☐ Do we communicate the value of, recognize, and reward qualities that contribute to success in any endeavor (such as persistence, cooperation, honesty, resourcefulness, etc.)?
- ☐ Do we design activities, interventions, and curricula to address, influence, or enhance those factors?

Are we stimulating high expectations and ambitious future thinking by inspiring our students to consider what can be achieved after high school?

- ☐ Do we expose students to a variety of "horizon broadening" experiences?
- ☐ Are we enabling students to discover skills and interests they didn't know theyhad?

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Future Options Education At Work: Two Case Studies

There are some middle schools and school districts already working to put the elements of Future Options Education in place. These are not middle schools that learned about the notion of Future Options Education, and decided to try it. Rather, they had already figured out that, to achieve their full potential, young adolescents need certain basics, and they began experimenting with ways to provide them. These basics included:

- personalized assistance by adults both in school and outside;
- individualized learning plans geared to students' special needs, interests, and aptitudes;
- a range of age- and stage-appropriate programs and supportive interventions to provide experiential learning; and
- involvement of community resources to broaden students' horizons, and to expand their future options for higher education and solid careers.

The two schools presented here are examples of those efforts. While each may involve more than the average school "doing business as usual" could handle, they do illustrate the ways in which schools can help young people make the connections between schooling and their futures. Moreover, while each school has undoubtedly changed since these descriptions were written, they also suggest ways in which other community institutions – local government, employers, community agencies, etc. – can participate in the educational process for early adolescents.

City Magnet School, Lowell, Massachusetts: The Nation's Only Micro-Society School

Now more than five years old, this magnet school in the middle of downtown Lowell is the site of a creative and ambitious undertaking. Students participate in a miniature society where they run their own court system, businesses, law firms, publishing companies and police force. While the school's first job is teaching basic skills, it attempts to do this job in a very different way. Every student must "work" and participate in the decision- making bodies that shape the future of theCity School, striving to make it a mirror of society and a model of participatory democracy.

Organized as a Democratic, Free Market Society. As a magnet school that reserves 40 percent of its slots for minority students, everyone at the school – students, parents, teachers and the principal – is a volunteer, choosing to be there, and agreeing with the school's philosophy. With help and guidance from teachers, students design and run a democratic, free-market society. Over the past five years, students have set up their own government, creating legislative, executive, and judicial branches. They have written and continually revise, amend, and update a school constitution and laws. They have set up their own courts and system of justice, a system of taxation through their own internal revenue service, an elected legislature, and even a lottery to supplement tax revenues.

The school is divided into three clusters – primary (K-2), intermediate (grades 3-5) and senior (grades 6-8). Each cluster has its own form of local self-government. The students have created an economy and currency (called Morgans instead of dollars, named for a previous Superintendent). The students run their own banks, have bank accounts, and run numerous businesses that have real jobs. Everyone gets paid for doing these jobs.

Making the Connection Between Skills and Jobs. To learn what they need to do these jobs, students must "go to school." They must take classes, study, and pass "competency exams" before they can hold jobs. For instance, to get a job in a bank or to start a business, students must pass the banking and accounting competency exam. To get a job on a newspaper or magazine, students must pass the publishing exam. Before graduating, students must pass all of the competency exams. Skills acquired in the classes are practiced and put to use in their micro-society, cementing the learning and promoting the acquisition of more complex and advanced skills.

A Positive Track Record. The school has been developing its curriculum and its philosophy over many years, adapting its governance and its

program as needed. The process of participation in the governance, the ownership and excitement generated by shared governance, and the high level of support and participation by parents, indicate that the school is on the right track. It has a long waiting list of families who wish to enroll their students.

The micro-society approach was invented by George Richmond (The Micro-Society School: A Real World in Miniature (Harper & Row, 1973) who piloted the program in a number of locations in and around New York City. Richmond aims to transform the stultifying world of the school and to involve students fully in "the real world." Says Richmond, "The process must have the power to penetrate the classroom and alter its way of life. And although the connection with work bears emphasis, the model must also offer students opportunities to become involved in academic pursuits, in recreation, in civic projects, and other productive activity. ...If this model had heroes, they might be called entrepreneurs."

The Chiron Middle School in Minneapolis, Minnesota

One of the first "charter" schools in the country, Chiron (pronounced KY-ron, and named for the last planet discovered, and for the wise centaur in Greek mythology who taught other gods) was given three years to try out an alternative form of education for grades 5 through 8, using its own approach to meeting district learning goals, parent and community resources, and unusual sites in the community as the actual school. The school district "chartered" a group of teachers to put together their own school, make curriculum decisions, team-teach, and participate in school management. Championed by AFT President, Albert Shanker, this school's approach has the support of the union, as a way to foster professional development, cooperative learning, coaching, and perhaps a totally new alternative way to provide education.

Emphasizing Real World Learning. Spearheaded by Minneapolis real estate developer, Ray Harris, the school is a public/private partnership with an emphasis on the real world. Students have been to a juvenile court for a discussion of law and government, to the Dome Stadium to talk about different types of jobs and what it takes to get games to happen at night, to the cornfields of the farm campus to learn math by counting and averaging using cornstalks. The students are excited about participating in action-oriented, experiential learning. Activities in arts, music, and dance are linked to basic skills such as reading, writing and math. Students also develop higher-order skills such as interviewing, notetaking, analysis, comparison, and evaluation.

An Individualized Learning Approach. Anchored at three different sites within the community, Chiron uses a downtown site to explore business, law and government, an environmental site with a science focus, and a visual and performing arts site with a fine arts focus. Chiron's 120 fifth and sixth graders mingle in three non-graded groups, which move from site to site in 12- week shifts. Each site takes responsibility for different aspects of the curriculum, using district texts as guides. Teachers work with each child and his or her parents to identify the student's interests and learning styles and develop an individualized "Family Learning Plan," (similar to the concept of the Future Options Education Plan mentioned in this publication). Under a site- based management plan, Chiron staff work with parent committees to run the school. The school board gave the school a lump-sum budget, allowing it to decide where to spend its resources.

Although Chiron students take required district-wide tests, staff and parents are working with University of Minnesota faculty to devise new ways to evaluate students. Students might compile portfolios or produce videotapes to demonstrate their proficiency in various areas. Learning will be measured by individual progress toward district learning outcomes in each student's personal learning plan. Students and parents will meet with teachers at least four times a year to discuss progress.

Applying the FOE Principles. This student/parent/community partnership applies most of the principles of Future Options Education. Students interact with the community through community service projects, working with mentors, and serving apprenticeships – all Future Options Education interventions. The school uses an individualized Family Learning Plan. It calls on parents, mentors and other community resources to provide a nurturing, individualized environment. It takes advantage of the lessons and resources available in the real world, and challenges students experientially with real world situations, rather than in disconnected classrooms.

Evaluate, continued from page 18

- ☐ Are we encouraging students to consider a college education, vocational training, and/or skilled jobs to be attainable post-high school goals?

Are we relating the present to the future by helping students see how the middle-grades are important to their future options?

- ☐ Are we motivating students to stay in school and making their experience meaningful?
- ☐ Are we relating academic subjects to each other and to the realities of students' current lives and the broader world?
- ☐ Are we showing the relationship between middle-grades education, secondary school education, vocational education, post-secondary education, and a better future?
- ☐ Are we demonstrating how academic and personal choices made during the middle-grades years can broaden or limit a student's later options?

Are we charting and implementing the road to the future by helping students set and achieve ambitious goals?

- ☐ Are we helping each student to develop a written Future Options Plan?
- ☐ Are we enabling students to understand what it takes to advance from where they are to where they want to go?
- ☐ Are we providing an ongoing series of comprehensive, developmentally-appropriate interventions that are coordinated across activities?
- ☐ Are we providing the supports and guidance students need to achieve their goals?
- ☐ Are we preparing middle-grades students to enter a high school program that maximizes their chances of success?
- ☐ Have we set up a system through which each student is supported with his/her Future Options Plan during the secondary school years?

Do We Have A Quality Initiative?

It's not enough to determine whether a process, activity, or intervention is offered. One must also evaluate its quality. For effective, quality programming to occur, our evaluation needs to ask questions such as:

Are we offering students structure and clear limits?

- ☐ Do we provide students with clear limits, and consistent discipline tied to those limits?
- ☐ Do we provide security through clear rules?
- ☐ Do we offer students input into rule formation?

Are we offering a diverse array of interventions?

- ☐ Are interventions interesting and fun?
- ☐ Do interventions base instructional strategies not on passive listening to lectures, but rather on discussions, activity-oriented learning, and cooperative learning?
- ☐ Does curriculum relate a diverse, detailed, multi-experientially-based course-load to everyday situations and career possibilities?
- ☐ Does instruction use multiple and culturally-diverse resources?
- ☐ Do we help students see connections and transferrable skills between subjects and disciplines?
- ☐ Does instruction incorporate activities that involve tactile, kinesthetic, and auditory perceptions?
- ☐ Do we promote basic skills development, integrating the use of basic and vocational skills?
- ☐ Does instruction promote critical thinking abilities and facilitate higher order thinking skills?
- ☐ Are we providing opportunities for physical activity?

Are we offering students the opportunity for self-exploration and definition?

- ☐ Do interventions induce students to broaden interests by trying new things?
- ☐ Do we assist students to develop sound judgement to make decisions about difficult situations they face every day so that they can make choices that are not self-destructive?

- ☐ Do we offer guidance activities to help students develop aspirations and motivation for opportunities beyond high school and encourage them to consider all choices?

Are we instilling students with a sense of competence and achievement?

- ☐ Does our school offer a climate that honors inquiry?
- ☐ Does instruction stress practical knowledge (not the same thing as basic skills)?
- ☐ Does our scheduling system allow adequate time spent on academic tasks?
- ☐ Do we provide a success-oriented atmosphere?
- ☐ Do classes provide an environment where competition is fair?
- ☐ Do we use, whenever possible, individualized and small-group instructional materials and practices?

Are we encouraging meaningful participation in school and community?

- ☐ Does our school use instruction and opportunties to help students develop a commitment to social and life values?
- ☐ Do teachers attempt to make curriculum rich with meaning and concept-based?

Are we incorporating positive social interaction with adults & peers?

- ☐ Does instruction enable students to work together in groups and encourage participatory skills?
- ☐ Does instruction incorporate peer teaching and cooperative learning techniques?
- ☐ Does instruction utilize a supportive peer culture?
- ☐ Is the school environment person-oriented rather than rule-oriented?
- ☐ Does the Future Options Education initiative use parents, teachers, community volunteers, and others as mentors and/or advisors?

Are we spurring students on to strive for their full potential?

- ☐ Does our staff confront and reject common misconceptions such as that academic ability is fixed very early and is largely unchangeable?
- ☐ Do our teachers and administrators truly believe that all students should and can learn?
- ☐ Do we challenge students to do things they don't think they can do?
- ☐ Do we have a system that regularly helps students grasp where they are, where they are capable of being, where they are expected to be, and how they are going to get there?
- ☐ Do students' Future Options Education Plans incorporate a vision, milestones, and regular wins enroute?
- ☐ Is the initiative designed to build strengths rather than focusing upon remediating problems?
- ☐ Do staff send a consistent message stressing that "everyone needs help sometime" – removing stigma from seeking assistance?
- ☐ Is staff careful not to treat students who need help as if they were "damaged goods?"
- ☐ Do teachers avoid public comparisons of students' abilities?
- ☐ Does the staff regularly recognize student achievements, incorporating positive feedback, incentives, and awards?

Is Our Approach Working?

Is the Future Options Education effort helping the students aspire and achieve, and producing positive outcomes in terms of higher educaiton, vocational training, and quality jobs? This final portion of the evaluation focuses on student outcomes and might compare those who participate in Future Options Education with those who don't, through such questions as:

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Future Options Education Resources

There are many national sources of help for educators and job training practitioners wishing to undertake some aspects of Future Options Education. The following is a brief sampling of the resources that are available. A complete resource list and bibliography are included in the full version of *Future Options Education.*

Recommended Reading: Newsletters and Reports

The CREMS Report, Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools, The Johns Hopkins University, 3505 North Carolina Street, Baltimore, MD, 21218.

High Strides: The Bimonthly Report on Urban Middle Grades, Education Writers Association, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Suite 310, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century, Carnegie Commission Report, Volume 21, Number 13, June 1989, The Restructuring of America's Middle School Instruction Through a Partnership Between School and Community, Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 11 Dupont Circle, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

The Unfinished Agenda: A New Vision For Child Development And Education, a statement by the Research and Policy Committee of the Committee for Economic Development, 477 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10022, 1991.

National Sources of Help

Academy for Educational Development, Inc.
100 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10011
(212) 243-1110

Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development
11 Dupont Circle, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 265-9080

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Are we keeping students in school?

- ☐ How many drop out of the middle-grades? High school?
- ☐ Is there any effect on attendance and truancy rates?
- ☐ What is the rate of grade retention? Suspensions?

Are we helping students improve achievement in school?

- ☐ How many pass courses that will give them access to a full range of options/ courses when they reach high school?
- ☐ What percentage move out of remedial programs?
- ☐ What percentage advance from a lower track to a higher track?
- ☐ What percentage of students are enrolled in honors courses?
- ☐ How many students enter "college track" courses in high school?

Are we helping students to meet the goals set out in their Future Options Plan?

- ☐ Does each student have a Plan?
- ☐ Is each student fulfilling all, or at least a significant number of, his/her personal goals?
- ☐ Are there patterns of goals that are consistently not being fulfilled?

Are students pursuing post-secondary education, vocational training, and/or primary labor market jobs?

- ☐ How many students eventually graduate from high school?
- ☐ How many students eventually attend college?
- ☐ How many students attend some other form of post-secondary education or skills training?
- ☐ How many students eventually obtain skilled jobs?

The Center for Corporate Community Relations
Boston College
36 College Road
Chestnut Hill, MA 02167-3835
(617) 552-4545

The Center for Early Adolescence
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Suite 211, Carr Mill Mall
Carrboro, NC 27510
(919) 966-1148

Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools (CREMS) The Johns Hopkins University
3505 North Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21218
(301) 338-7570

Coalition of Essential Schools
Box 1938
Brown University
Providence, RI 02912
(401) 863-3384

Education Writers Association
1001 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Suite 310
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 429-9680

Institute for Citizen Involvement in Education
10 Seminary Place
New Brunswick, NJ 08903
(201) 745-5849

National Middle School Association
4807 Evanswood Drive
Columbus, OH 43229-6292
(614) 848-8211

The National Resource Center for Middle Grades Education University of South Florida
College of Education, EDU-115
Tampa, FL 33620-5650
(813) 974-2530

William T. Grant Foundation
Commission on Youth and America's Future
1001 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Suite 301
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 775-9731

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CHR Notes

This fall represents a busy time at the Center for Human Resources. As the Center completes its work on the second year of the *Youth Research and Technical Assistance (YRTA) Project*, funded by the Department of Labor, other projects are coming to a close, and a number of new initiatives are beginning.

YRTA Project

A major focus of the Center's work for the U.S. Department of Labor this year has been the development and testing of a series of training materials and guides on case management, assessment, and program options for in-school and out-of-school youth. Scheduled for release during the winter are four major sets of materials:

- A *Practitioner's Guide*, *"Decision Maker's Summary,"* and a *Trainer's "Toolkit"* on employability assessment for at-risk youth.

- A *Practitioner's Guide*, *"Decision Maker's Summary,"* and a *Trainer's "Toolkit"* on case management for at-risk youth.

In both of these cases, the *Practitioner's Guide* provides an introduction to definitions, guiding principles, and implementation strategies; the *Decision Maker's Summary* highlights key principles and decision-making options; and the *Trainer's "Toolkit"* provides background information, lesson plans, and training materials for use by trainers conducting staff development. Brandeis is also revising its extensive *Guide to Case Management for At-Risk Youth*, first distributed in 1989, and will also be making available the full version of its resource guide on assessment: *Defining and Assessing Basic Employability Skills: Practitioner's Views and Resources*. (An abridged version of *Defining and Assessing* was published as the Summer, 1992 issue of *Youth Programs*)

In addition to the case management and assessment publications, Brandeis has also prepared two other guides: *A Practitioner's Guide to Program Options for Out-of-School Youth* and *A Practitioner's Guide to Program Options for In-School Youth*. Each of these guides provides an overview of the characteristics and service needs of at-risk youth and a discussion of current trends in program design and implementation. Both include reviews of recent research on program models, descriptions of a number of existing programs, and discussions of "lessons" based on recent research and interviews with practitioners.

We anticipate that all of the guides and summaries will be distributed through Brandeis or the Department of Labor and that the Toolkits will be distributed to trainers through a series of train-the-trainer institutes.

Youthwire Update

The *Youthwire* electronic bulletin board continues to grow rapidly. There are now over 250 registered *Youthwire* users representing practitioners and policy makers at the federal, state, and local level. The Center for Human Resources recently conducted a demonstration of *Youthwire* at the New England Employment and Training Conference and upcoming demonstrations are planned at the NaCo Employment Policy and Human Services Conference (Reno, November 20-24th) and NGA's employment and training policy conference, "Investing In Youth" (New Orleans, December 9-11th) this fall.

Youthwire also continues to add to the services it offers on-line. In addition to electronic mail and conferencing, *Youthwire* now offers on-line access to the national ERIC database and to the Dropout Prevention Clearinghouse at Clemson University. Both databases enable *Youthwire* users to search for publications and information on programs in areas ranging from dropout prevention to computer-aided instruction or substance abuse programs.

Finally, one of the major topics of interest to employment and training practitioners today is services for out-of-school youth. In response, *Youthwire* is asking users to post program descriptions and/or comments on serving out-of-school youth on-line as part of *Youthwire's* "youth" conference. Our goal is to encourage practitioners to use *Youthwire* to share information about the programs in their communities and to exchange ideas about "what works." Practitioners who participate in the on-line exchange between October 15th and December 15th will also be eligible for a special, "mystery prize." To join *Youthwire* and take part in the exchange, call the Center for Human Resources at (617) 736-3770.

National and Community Service Evaluation

This fall, the Center also begins work on a major new initiative. Abt Associates and the Center for Human

Resources have been chosen to conduct the national evaluation of community service efforts sponsored by the Commission for National and Community Service. Over the next three years, Abt and Brandeis staff will be studying four broad categories of community service efforts funded by the Commission:

- the Serve-America program, which includes community service activities for elementary and secondary school-aged youth;
- Higher Education projects aimed at involving colleges and their students in community service;
- Youth Service and Conservation Corps programs; and
- National and Community Service models.

The evaluation will include a participant impact analysis (focusing particularly on the Youth Service and Conservation Corps and the National and Community Service models) and intensive study of selected sites to identify and document "best practices" and to assess community impacts of the various programs. Brandeis will have primary responsibility for evaluation of the Serve-America and Higher Education components. Abt Associates is the prime contractor and will be responsible for the quantitative analysis and evaluation of the Conservation Corps and National and Community service models.

Age Targeting and Early Adolescence

The Center for Human Resources is also beginning work on an analysis of the impact of federal policies in preparing middle-school-aged youth for self-sufficiency.

Under a two-year grant from the Lilly Endowment, the Center will be looking at the extent to which current federal policies and programs encourage effective services for young adolescents and will be working with practitioners, policy makers, youth advocates and others to determine the need for new federal policy initiatives and/or the types of policy approaches most likely to have an impact on services for youth. One of the major questions guiding the project will be whether policies need to be targeted more specifically to serve this age group, and whether age targeting itself is an effective policy approach. Activities under the grant will include an analysis of existing federal policies; research into the types of services actually delivered to young adolescents; focus groups aimed at identifying both needs and effective policy alternatives; and the development of recommendations and possibly model legislation addressing self-sufficiency needs of young adolescents.

State and Local Efforts: Evaluation and Systems Redesign

Brandeis is also beginning work on a number of state and local level initiatives aimed at improving the delivery of employability development services. In Alabama, the Center will be conducting an evaluation of assessment practices in the state's three Service Delivery Areas and providing practical recommendations on how current systems might be strenthened. In Boston, New Orleans, and Little Rock, Center staff will be assisting local administrators and policy makers in assessing their local systems and in developing new youth program and system design strategies.

Teen Parent Self-Sufficiency Project

During the past three years, the Center for Human Resources has been working with teams from five cities to help develop community-wide strategies for fostering self-sufficiency among teenage parents. Funded by the Charles Steward Mott Foundation and the Lilly Endowment, the Teenage Parent Self-Sufficiency Project aimed at helping communities bring the employment, education, and human services sectors together to develop common strategies and to improve the delivery of a comprehensive set of services for teen parents. Brandeis has served as the project convenor and as a source of technical assistance on issues ranging from partnership development to assessment and case management systems. The five participating cities are Camden, NJ; Indianapolis, IN; New Orleans, LA; Oklahoma City, OK; St. Petersburg, FL.

This fall, the "official" phase of the Self-Sufficiency Project comes to an end, though each of the cities expects to continue work on teenage parenting issues and Brandeis and the five cities hope to continue meeting. During the project's three years, each of the cities has established a senior-level policy team that has brought together the community's key youth-serving institutions and has identified a number of strategies to jointly pursue in their communities. Those strategies have included development of common case

management systems, joint efforts to establish in-school programs for teen parents, and expansion of comprehensive programs that include employability development for in-school and out-of-school parents.

This fall, Brandeis will publish a report on the Self-Sufficiency Project that includes case studies of the efforts in three of the five cities and a discussion of the lessons learned across all five sites. For copies of the report, contact the Center for Human Resources at (617) 736-3770.

Research Assistant
Center for Human Resources

The Center for Human Resources (CHR) at Brandeis University has an opening for a Research Assistant. The Center is a leading research, training, and policy development center working with policy leaders, planners and program operators across the country to develop better education and youth employment-related programs and service systems for disadvantaged young people.

We are looking for an energetic and creative individual to work with senior staff in conducting research, providing technical assistance, and delivering practitioner training. The Center is particularly interested in recruiting candidates with experience in the issues of youth and employability; with the ability to gather and synthesize information from a variety of sources and to identify those elements relevant to practitioners and policy makers; and with the capacity to work on a variety of projects and against deadlines. Candidates should also have knowledge of wordprocessing and ability to generate high quality products independent of support staff. We strongly encourage women and minority candidates to apply. Brandeis is an equal opportunity employer.

Interested candidates should send a letter of interest and a resume to: Susan P. Curnan, Director, Center for Human Resources, Brandeis University, 60 Turner Street, Box 9110, Waltham, MA 02254.

Family and Children's Policy Fellowship
The Heller School, Brandeis University

The Heller School at Brandeis University recently announced establishment of a new Family and Children's Policy fellowship in honor of Sol Chick Chaikin, a long-time Brandeis trustee and Heller School overseer. The Chaikin fellowship offers two years of full tuition, a $10,000 stipend, and $2500 in education-related expenses for students in the Heller School's Ph.D. program in social welfare policy.

The Chaikin fellowship is intended to attract well-qualified, dynamic Ph.D. candidates who are committed to addressing the complex problems that confront the American family. The Chaikin fellows will be affilliated with the Heller School's Family and Children's Policy Center and will be expected to use their expertise to convert ideas into action and develop policies that can help families become active participants in the problem-solving process.

The Heller School is seeking applicants for the first Chaikin Fellowship, which will be awarded for September, 1993 admission to the Heller School. For more information, contact the Office of Admissions, The Heller School, Brandeis University, P.O. Box 9110, Waltham, MA 02254, (617) 736-3800. The Heller School also offers a Master's degree in Management of Human Services. For information, contact the Admissions Office.

Youth Programs

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